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[184] ments through a special person (*chunel*)
for each of the four clans, and differed from
Oxchuc, where the case is presented to the
nearest old man of the clan. In Cancuc, ac-
cording to Guiteras Holmes (1947, p. 3):

The boy's parents dealt with the *Chunel* of
the girl's clan when petitioning her. He re-
ceived the gifts and gave approval; and then
accompanied by the boy and his parents he
went into the house of the girl's parents. There,
he presented the boy's petition. Nobody could
oppose the *Chunel*'s decisions. The girl would
die if she didn't obey the decisions of the elder
of the clan.

583 Once a marriage feast is finished, the boy
stays in his parents-in-law's house to fulfill
the bride price (*stojinam*). This service,
which consists in helping the father-in-law
in the milpa and in other duties, usually
lasts a year, or less if arrangements are
made in advance. Frequently during this
period the man spends alternate periods of
three weeks with his parents-in-law and
with his own parents. When he has the
means to do it, he builds his own house and
starts the new cycle of a nuclear family.

• 581 After the first year of marriage, if the
583 couple get along together, the man must
574 make a present of two garrafones of aguar-
[273] diente and the same petitionary items of
[614] food, though in larger amounts. This time,
more of the girl's clan are present, and so
increase the importance of the event. The
purpose is to celebrate the success of the
couple and the union that will exist be-
tween the two families. This big *tertulia*,
along with the corresponding meal, is called

[888] *mukel-ja* ('abundance of drink'). Old men of
[273] the clan who cannot attend receive at their
homes the portion of aguardiente they
should have drunk. On the other hand, if
586 the couple could not get along during the
first year and the union is annulled because
of the woman's fault, her parents must give
back all they have received during the first
ritual.

581 Finally, to bring all these duties to an
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581 end, the husband gives a big meal sometime
574 (even 30 years later) which must be attended
by the important members of the wife's
clan. Many illnesses in a family are attributed
[1753] to the fact that the man did not fulfill
this third requirement of a food gift (*oshe-
vuelto-uaj-matz*, 'third delivery of food').

584 Another custom, known as *yajk make
achish* ('cover or secure the girl'), is practiced
when the chosen girl is too young
(10-12 years) to get married. To secure her
in the future, the boy's parents make arrangements
with those of the girl, offering
them liquor that other members of the girl's
clan also share. When she grows older, they
proceed with the wedding arrangements
and the customary formal ceremonies.

583 Another form of marriage, existing among
very traditional groups, begins with the capture
of the girl. This happens when she has
no father or important man representing the
house. The boy and his parents must obtain
cooperation from one of the male members
of the girl's clan. With this accomplice the
men go to the girl's house at midnight, take
her, and bring her to the boy's parents either
by persuading her mother with liquor or by
force. Days later, they try to calm the anger
of the important people of her clan, bringing
further bottles of liquor. Usually the
union becomes formally recognized after
this, and the couple settle in their own
home with the neighbors' approval. It is
thus a sort of institutionalized capture.

581 Among the less conservative communities,
177 these forms of marriage are being replaced
585 by Ladino forms, which regard marriage not
as a contract between two lineages or families
but as an agreement between two individuals.
Furthermore, the Catholic ceremony
is considered very important. Premarital sexual
relations and elopement are frequent.
583 Metzger states that, "in Aguacatenango, to
836 a considerable extent, the marriage choice
584 is made by the boy and the girl after sexual
[836] experimentation and a period of 'going
steady.' The boy tells his family about it
and they proceed to make the arrangements

[P 218-B]

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THIRDS AND TEMPLES

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554 "giving the head" to certain elder women, but the reason could not
576 be ascertained.

- 581 Marriage is an economic and social affair, apparently free of religious significance. Don Arturo Tovilla of Cacate-el, gave us a description of the manner of seeking a wife, which is here paraphrased. It will be seen that the importance, ceremonially, centers on the contract with the parents, while the actual joining in marriage is not stressed.

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The boy's father goes with the boy to the girl's house, both dressed in their best clothes, and carrying a gift of three bottles (pints) of aguardiente "and some animal." His father tells the girl's father that his son wishes to marry the daughter; to which the answer is to call the girl and ask her if she likes him. She says nothing, but keeps on scratching the wall with her finger and the floor with her toe, thereby indicating that she likes the boy, while showing the proper maidenly modesty. The latter gives her a coloured handkerchief, pearl beads, etc., with which the contract is sealed.

The boy is obligated to bring to her house what the father may ask, such as corn, beans, aguardiente, as well as to help in the work for a year. He makes a social visit each Sunday, which the girl must receive. At the end of the time appointed by the parents, he takes her to his house.

If the girl does not signify her consent in the manner described, the match does not take place.

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When the parents of one or both parties do not countenance the match, it may happen that the children, taking the law into their own hands, run away. The procedure in this case has become formalized so that, while unpleasant enough to act as a deterrent, it recognizes this as a regular manner of marrying. This description also is paraphrased from Señor Tovilla.

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When the parents forbid, but both children desire the match, after the boy has gone to the girl's house and been refused, his obligation of respect is ended. He builds a house in a retired place in the jungle. He and the girl meet to make their plans where she goes to get water, for which purpose she may often choose a spring a kilometer or more from her house. At an appointed time, they run away.

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When he has carried her off and hidden her, his parents must go and apologize to hers. The girl's father tells the boy's not to leave before being punished. He, however, finds and brings in the couple, who kneel before the girl's parents. The boy's shirt is taken off, and

Rituals of Life Crisis

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tual practices and are carried on in the home. Sometimes a church and/or civil marriage is held in addition, but the union is not consummated until the traditional home marriage has taken place.

The betrothal, or *l'om*, is an extended series of negotiations in which the boy's representatives plead with the girl's family to accept the suit. Anytime in a boy's late teens or early twenties, he may initiate the suit by speaking to his father, or the father may undertake to find a wife for his son. The parents of the boy then request an older woman who has some skill in speaking the formal speeches to serve as the *me? C'om*, mother of the betrothal, and an older man to serve as the *statal C'om*, or leader of the betrothal (sometimes he is called *mam C'om* or grandfather of the betrothal). These intermediaries may or may not be related to the family initiating the request. Nonkin are usually chosen from among compadres or a neighborhood group. When the father requests that they act as intermediaries, he brings a gift of liquor, chocolate, and bread.

Before any negotiations are begun with the girl's family, the boy's family calls together the representatives. These include his grandparents, uncles, and aunts, his padrino of baptism and confirmation, and possibly neighbors or nearby compadres of his parents. The gathering then questions the boy to learn whether his interest in the girl is sincere and exclusive of any other infatuation. In this session, called the *?il' yo?tan* or "taking of the heart," the boy goes to each of his representatives and kneels before them as they question him, asking him if he wants that girl and only that girl. He is told that marriage is an important relationship, not to be treated "as a toy"; the boy should be interested in only this girl, and if he should cause them to have to go to the *cabildo* "the day after tomorrow," it would cause embarrassment to the entire company.

At the final gathering, called the *?il' rason* or "taking of the understanding," the assembled *me?iltatil* of both the boy and the girl give the couple further advice. The boy is told what is expected of him in the marriage. It is a minimal statement: he should not leave her tomorrow, he should not beat her, he should bring home corn and beans, and all will be well. The girl is told that she should prepare her husband's meals and be waiting for him in the house when he comes home from work. Respect, called "hearing" and "feeling" (both combined in the verb *I?awayi*), is

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584 stressed for both. The boy is again warned not to bring the me[?]iltatil em-
581 barrassment by causing them to go to the cabildo.

During the six months to a year between the first and the last gatherings, the boy's representatives make up to a dozen visits to the girl's house. The patterning of behavior during these visits reveals cyclical and progressive tendencies of which the participants are consciously aware. These progressions involve time, the number of people involved, and the size of the gift.

584 Time progression affects two aspects of the courtship: the hour of the visit of the boy's mam [?]om and me[?] [?]om, which becomes later, and the length of the visit—it is longer each time. The first visit is a tactical maneuver involving the early-bird ploy. The me[?] [?]om, having stayed awake after the all-night ceremony of the "taking of the heart," arrives at the girl's house at the "dawning dusk of the world." She stays only long enough to leave the gift and announce her intention of continuing the suit indefinitely. The timing of the last visit when the "taking of the understanding" occurs contrasts with this in that the members of the boy's wedding party arrive late in the evening and do not leave until four or five in the morning. The time of arrival and departure is plotted for each visit in Figure 5. The progressively later arrival time indicates increasing security on the part of the members of the betrothal party that the girl's family will be there to receive them, while the extended staying time indicates growing confidence and the breaking down of the barriers of reserve. Even up to the last visit, however, the members of the betrothal party take two quick parting shots of liquor as they leave the boy's house to "rid themselves of their embarrassment."

584 The increase in the number of members of the betrothal party who go
431 to the girl's house is tied to the increase in the amount of the gift. The role terms of the members of the betrothal party indicate their association to the gift, as shown on Table 21.

Finally, the progression in the value of the gift is the cultural item most commented upon by the people, both within the village and in comparing customs with other Indian towns. This permissible variation indicates the relative wealth of the boy's family and the relative resistance of the girl's family. While the quantities vary from one [?]om to another, in all cases

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 128]

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The links between members of the me²iltatil of a couple united in marriage are reinforced if another marriage occurs between the two households. While this does not provide a basis for prescribed or preferred mating, those who have such exchanges say they prefer it because the negotiations in the *Com* proceed more amicably, especially in the earlier stage.

Solidarity of the group is reinforced when the me²iltatil are called upon to help settle conflicts that arise in the marriage. The household review of marital conflict requires a formal gathering of all the members of the betrothal party who represented both the husband and the wife. Parents of the couple state the evidence and recite the events which led up to the conflict. The husband or wife may interject, speaking in their own defense. The elders suggest how the person judged guilty (usually the man) ought to behave and what his responsibilities are. A transcription of one such case is included in Appendix 1A. This concerns a couple who had separated two years after the marriage. The following statement of the padrino of the wedding ceremony, speaking in lieu of the leader of the *Com* who could not be present, shows the techniques they use to adjust relations:

Now he [the husband] wants to change for the better. You [speaking to the husband] ought not to drink. It is better to eat meat and vegetables and find corn and beans for your wife and child. Now we have arranged it, and you can take your wife and child to your house.

A successful outcome depends on all people in the dispute accepting the judgment of the elders. If this cannot be achieved, the abused partner seeks redress in the courts. Women are most frequently the plaintiffs. The plaintiff is supported by her parents who appear with her in court and help argue her case. The defendant may appear with his parents, if they support him, but very often they feel shame and do not.

In court cases, two judges hear the evidence and they, along with the president and other civil officials deliver the verdict. The quality of interpersonal relations does not differ much from that which one finds in the household review, as can be seen in comparing the court review included in Appendix 1B with the household review. In the former case, the woman's wrath had been aroused by her husband occasionally returning to his first wife, and by his failure to give her money for expenses. Since he

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In the Eyes of the Ancestors

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[837] There is no double standard for extramarital sexual relations, although men abuse the prohibition more often than women, judging from court cases. The ability the women has to assert herself rests on her economic contribution in pottery-making and on the fact that female household help is not part of the labor market.

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831 Female sexuality has the connotation of negative power over male sexuality. A woman should not step over a man's feet or his clothing since she could affect his virility. This negative power emanates from the odors of a woman's body, and is captured by anything in contact with it. A woman's skirt cast over the head of a bull can tame him, and the water used by a woman to wash her body, particularly the vagina if she has had children, is drunk to cure snake bites because it is very "cold."

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[752] Sexuality is seldom extended beyond persons to material objects. There is some feeling that a man's tools, especially the machete and hoe, are male and that a woman's tools, especially the grinding stone, are female. Corn is a crop of men, while beans are a woman's crop, identified with the Virgin. But I could not get much farther with such distinctions.

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[241] The accidents of birth determine the recruitment of successive generations into the family of orientation. There is no outright adoption, but a child may be "lent" to a childless couple, usually by a sibling of one of the spouses, or a grandchild may take up residence in the house of a grandparent when all the children have moved to separate residences. Parents discipline a badly behaved child with the threat, "I am going to sell you to care for someone's house," but I have never known of a case of outright sale of a child.

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[603] The selection of a spouse is a decision based on both universalistic as well as particularistic considerations. Both the boy and the girl should be hardworking, sober, and dutiful residents of the same section of the dual division. It is considered to be of greater importance that the boy feel affection toward the girl than vice versa. The "taking of the heart" is a test of the strength and exclusiveness of the boy's interest in his chosen mate, and there is no counterpart for the girl. Although there is no term for romantic love, the closest approximation being "want" or "ask for" a woman, there is an awareness of the importance of a warm, affectionate basis if a marriage relationship is to last "at least until the day after tomorrow." A suitor is accepted if he is known to be a hard worker and if he

Roles, Persons, and Performance

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does not drink or have a record of fighting. Character traits are given 581 •
more significance than wealth, since the minimal differences which distin- 582
guish rich from poor can be lost within a few months if a man drinks
heavily or does not work. The close identification among siblings means [593]
that in accepting a suit the girl's parents will take into consideration not
only the boy's reputation, but those of his brothers. If they are considered
to be disobedient, lazy, or frequently drunk, their brother may have diffi-
culty finding a woman.

Positions of ceremonial importance in the household celebrations are 794
filled by any of the elders who have acquired knowledge of the prayers. 592
The nakawanehetik are chosen from among any of the bilaterally-ex- 782
tended relatives, compadres, or padrinos who have served five times in reli- 555
gious office. They are selected not only on the basis of how well they 561
know the prayers, but also on their behavior when required to drink. A [273]
man who can hold his liquor and still speak well or who quietly goes to
sleep rather than fighting when drunk is preferred. The me'il k'op is se-
lected from among the female complements of these male relatives. She ac-
quires her knowledge of the prayers in familial settings. The b'alnialetik
are chosen from the kihtz'inal (younger siblings and cousins), or from
among compadres or members of neighboring households. The rank order
between the two sets of roles—the nakawanehetik and b'alnialetik—de-
pends on relative age; thus the older nakawanehetik have greater author-
ity.

Familial roles provide both a pattern and a springboard for other roles 621
in the community. The father-son role pair is extended to the relationships 593
between senior and junior officials in both the religious hierarchy and the 561
curing hierarchy. For each saint, the elder mayordomo is called "father" 784
(*Tatil Martoma*), and the younger is called "son" (*Nic'nal Martoma*). A 192
man must fill the junior post at least two times before taking on the senior
post. For each side of the dual division, the elder curer (when there was a [756]
recognized leader) was called "father" (*Tatil ?u?ul*), and the younger
was called "son" (*Nic'nal ?u?ul*) or sometimes "youth" (*Biktal ?u?ul*).
The term *me'il* (woman who has borne a child) is used in the reference 621
to ceremonial roles played by women in the household, as in the case of 592
me'il k'op (woman speaker) and *me'il č'om* (mother of the betrothal). 562

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794 Familial role requirements must be fulfilled in order for public roles to be undertaken. A man must be married in order to enter into even the lowest posts in the civil and religious hierarchies.

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554 Only in the case of the alferces has wealth ever been a criterion for recruitment. These four officials had to be able to spend 3,000 pesos during their year in office. The heavy expenditures failed to give prestige to the official, and the display of wealth excited envy rather than respect. The result was that people called upon to accept the post had to be imprisoned before they would accept.

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756 Recruitment to roles in almost all institutional contexts is based on innate qualities; special skills and knowledge are attributes acquired in office or other role positions rather than requirements for undertaking roles. Curers are recruited because they are recognized as having an animal spirit; they learn whatever skills are required after they have been initiated into the profession. The curers' special position in the society rests more on esoteric powers than on esoteric knowledge. Everyone in the community knows the herbs and medicines which are prescribed, and most men can give as comprehensive a taxonomy of illnesses as any practicing curer.

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[883] Economic roles, though largely undifferentiated for each sex, are consciously learned and transmitted. Boys accompany their fathers or elder brothers to the field at about the age of eight and continue working with them until they reach independence. Observation of behavior alone would seem to indicate an unconscious absorption of the role of agricultural worker, but informants recount episodes in which training in field work was explicitly transmitted by their fathers or brothers, and formal approval of their ability to do the tasks announced to their mothers. Parents express fear that school attendance not only interferes with working in the milpa, but that it will cause the child to forget what he has learned in the field. Regardless of what other tasks a man performs, he thinks of himself as a farmer.

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323 Becoming a potter requires an even more explicit training procedure. The fine linguistic segmentation of each act and movement in the schedule of pottery-making is a clue to the explicit transmission of tasks by the

621 his children, nor can he keep control of village affairs after his year of service has been fulfilled. Even a man occupying a post of high responsibility and prestige, a juez (judge) for example, becomes just an ordinary citizen after he leaves the office. All the men in the village theoretically, and most of them in practice, become village officers at some time in their life.

An individual starts at the bottom of the hierarchical ladder in the cargo of policia (also called mayer, topil or comisariado), which is a messenger or cleaning and errand boy for both the Mayordomos and Cabildo members. (He is the hands and feet

• [581] of the government.) The only requirement for this job is to be married. After this position has been "passed," a man is ready to start climbing the ladder to higher officerships, if he fulfills the other requirements. He must have a child, a wife, and the [58] [556] money which he is compelled to spend as part of the job: new clothes, liquor, and perhaps money to pay other men to help him with the agricultural work to which he cannot, being an officer, dedicate his full time.

During his life time, a man is required to pass a certain number of positions in the government, alternating Church and Ayuntamiento posts with rest periods of between one and three 62 years. After he passes the required number of officerships, and 887 by then he would be an old man, he becomes, automatically, a 888 pasado (a man that has passed his service), and can retire to private life, or become a principal, a member of the Elders' Council, a "father of the town." The Principales are the elder men in the village, highly respected for their wisdom and sought

621 them to "overlook" the trespasser, but not many young men are
578 willing to risk the ire of the other barrio bachelors, nor the
582 gossip and sanctions applied to them by their own barrio mates.¹

621 Each barrio plays a role in the political and religious
794 organization of the village by sending an approximately equal
number of officers to the Ayuntamiento and the Mayordomías. Al-
though in some years there are more delegates from one barrio,
they attempt to correct the imbalance in the succeeding years.

[623] The Principales (council of elders) have also equal representation.

621 Escuadrilla groups (adolescent boys' gangs) and unmarried
573 women's Church groups are formed among barrio mates. Women, with
575 few exceptions, used the water wells or pipe lines in their
312 barrio of residence (the exceptions include women who originally
came from the other barrio) and who do their washing at places in

[476] the river on their barrio side. Men who work together at such
tasks as buying and butchering a cow, building a path or clearing
an irrigation ditch belong to the same barrio. House parties

[527] organized to buy candles for the Church before a special Saint's
[123] day are barrio affairs, and no resident of the other barrio (with

[575] the exception of the anthropologist) is invited. In the past,
there were, in Aguacatenango, religious sororities sponsored by the
Catholic Church, and each barrio had a separate one. There

• [581] ¹A man that has married once is considered to have had
[587] his share of the available women of the barrio. Second marriages,
especially with girls who have never married before, are not well
thought of. It is common, then, that second marriages occur across
barrio lines. A man finds it easier to cope with the antagonism
of the other barrio men (who are expected, in any case, to be
antagonistic) than with the bachelors and neighbors in his own
barrio, where he has to face the antagonism in every day inter-
action.

585 family, that she starts a new life. She now has a new family and
183 a new home where she should learn new ways of doing things from
593 her mother-in-law, and forget the old ones she learned from her
606 mother. Among her duties as a good wife and daughter-in-law she
should keep her husband well fed and clean, obey her mother-in-
law for whom she should work hard, and respect the head of the
household (her father-in-law). She should not visit her family
too often, and she should gather firewood with her mother-in-law
instead of with her mother.¹ The ceremony indicates two things:

- [581] (1) the transfer of the wife's reproductive and labor power from
her natal home to her husband's; (2) the boundaries of her new
role. In a sense, the people of Aguacatenango define the role of
a wife in terms of her performance as a worker and as a daughter-
in-law, and in terms of her relations with all the members of the
household rather than only in terms of her relation to her husband.

593 On the other hand, a new husband's performance is under
885 trial. He has to demonstrate that he can get along with his wife,
[851] and become a father, before his role as a dependent child is re-
placed by his role as a married man. At the time of acquiring a
wife, a man is regarded by the community as a "child," being both
economically and jurally dependent upon his father, who has
complete authority over his actions, and is directly responsible
for his son's misdeeds.²

[582] ¹One of my informants tells me that although she was robada
by her husband (she lived in the other barrio) the night she ar-
rived at her husband's household, her father-in-law gave her a
shortened version of the wedding speech. I do not know if this is
a common practice.

[592] ²If a young man commits a crime while living under his
[672] father's roof, the father is responsible for his defense and for
paying the fines to the Avuntamiento.

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During the first few years of marriage, he slowly becomes a fat (man). He establishes his own nuclear family, and he is able to take up the first officership in the local government, acquiring thus the rights to political ascension in the civil-religious hierarchy. We could say that the period of patri/virilocal residence has the function of smoothing the transition between bachelorhood and the responsibilities of married life.

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Aguacatecos believe that a marriage has proved stable once children are produced and the man is capable of carrying on the economic burden of a family of his own. At this time, the couple should move to a house of their own, and form an independent household. A father, then, has to provide his son with a house site, in addition to a parcel to grow milpa.

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Soon, a younger brother (ideally, children marry in order of seniority) will marry and bring his wife into the parental home, starting a new cycle. The last of the sons (the po'h)

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should stay with the parents until their death, and he and his wife will inherit the parental house. It is preferable to have

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only one daughter-in-law at a time living in the household. One informant suggested that the reason is that the mother-in-law is bound to prefer one of the two women, and this creates jealousy between them and fights.¹

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¹When a second son marries, if the first son and his wife stay in the sitio they set up a separate kitchen, and eat their meals separately. In this case, the first daughter-in-law becomes independent of the mother-in-law, and works by herself, no longer under her mother-in-law's direct power. Except for the close spatial proximity, this arrangement functions as if the couple has set up a separate homestead, and the couple forms a separate domestic group within the same sitio (lot). The separate kitchen, or rather,